



# Making Word Documents Accessible

## Overview

This job aid has been created by the STMA Section 508 Workgroup and provides step-by-step instructions and accompanying screenshots on how to make **Word Documents** 508 compliant and accessible for PC platforms.

**Note:** If there is no other way to make the content accessible, provide a separate accessible version. This is most often done by creating a full-text, 508 compliant text document.

Use the following as a checklist and guide to help craft presentations that are useful to all.

## File Names and Properties

Element	Description
File Name	Make file names descriptive and concise. They should contain no special characters and be no more than 30 characters in length. <b>Note:</b> Hyphens (-) are acceptable in file names.  <b>Example:</b> 508Compliance-Handout.docx
<a href="#">Document Properties</a>	Complete the Title, Author, Subject, and Tags fields.

# Layout and Formatting

We recommend using only the basic Word Document templates.

Element	Description
<a href="#">Bullets and Numbering</a>	Use the Bullets and Numbering tools to create bulleted or numbered lists. Do not manually type lists preceded by using special characters such as hyphens, asterisks, or wingdings.
<a href="#">Color Contrast</a>	Use dark-colored lettering on a white or light-colored background.
<a href="#">Color for Emphasis</a>	Provide an alternate method of adding emphasis to text; do not rely solely on color.
<a href="#">Comments</a>	Remove any comments from the text.
Fonts	Use standard fonts such as Times New Roman, Verdana, Arial, Helvetica, or Calibri.
<a href="#">Footnotes</a>	Create footnotes using the Footnotes linking tool.
<a href="#">Headings</a>	Use headings to enable screen readers to easily navigate your page.
<a href="#">Hyperlinks and Email Addresses</a>	Add meaningful hyperlink text. When written out, web addresses should be complete, including the http:// or https://. Email addresses should also be complete and correct. Both should be linked to an active web or email destination.
Multimedia	If you are including other types of media, such as audio or video files within your presentation, ensure that they also meet government standards for 508 compliance.
<a href="#">Sequencing</a>	Ensure the items in your document are sequenced properly for the screenreader.

# Images

Element	Description
<a href="#">Alternative (Alt) Text</a>	Use alternative text to describe any images or shapes that are important to your presentation. Do not provide alternative text for images that are purely decorative.
Background Images and Watermarks	We recommend that you do not use pictures, images, or watermarks as backgrounds in your Word documents as this can cause problems for those with low vision.
<a href="#">Chart Labels</a>	Ensure that your charts all have a title, legend, and access labels.
<a href="#">Descriptive Text</a>	Include text that describes a complex image, chart, or graph above or below the image.
WordArt	As a general rule, WordArt is discouraged. WordArt creates a

# Tables

When creating tables, use the Tables Tool on the Insert tab. Create your table using the right to left / top to bottom reading order.

When including tables created outside of Word, save them as an image file and insert them within your presentation as an image - be sure to add Alt and Descriptive text as needed.

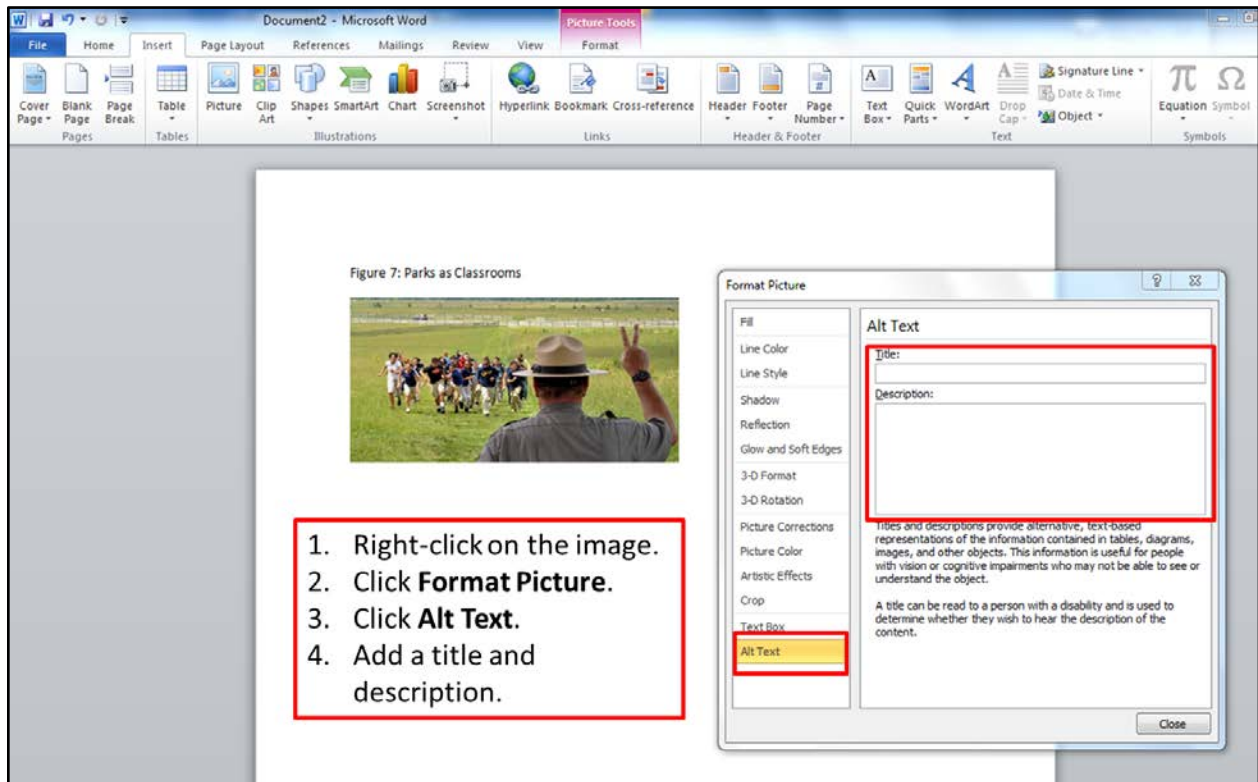
Element	Description
Cells	Avoid blank or empty cells. Do not merge cells unless the final product will be a PDF or HTML file.
<a href="#">Descriptions</a>	As with images, include brief descriptive text for the table.
<a href="#">Table Row Page Breaks</a>	Rows should break cleanly at the end of a page.
<a href="#">Table Header Row</a>	Designate the first row of your table as the header row.

# Details

## Alternative (Alt) Text

When adding alternative text, be brief but descriptive. Assistive technologies use the Description field of the graphic when “reading” the information to the user. If the image is purely decorative, leave the alt text blank.

**Figure 1: Steps to add Alt Text**



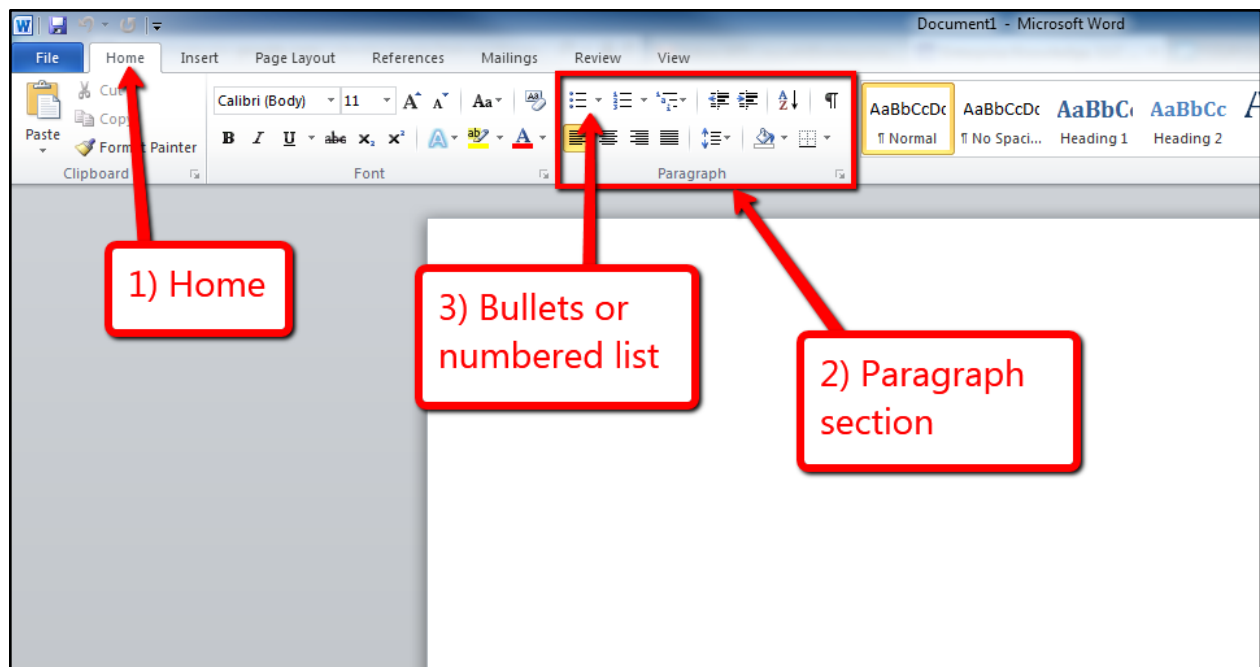
To add alt text:

1. Right-click the picture or object.
2. Click **Format** (Object or Picture).
3. Click Alt Text.
4. Complete the following:
  - **Title** – Type an identifiable title for the graphic.
  - **Description** – Type a brief description of the image.
5. Click **Close**.

## Bullets and Numbering

When creating bulleted or numbered lists, use the Bullets or Numbering tool in Word. Using these tools provides the right formats for assistive technologies to use. Change bullet shapes as needed using the Define New Bullet feature as needed. Do not use Wingdings for bullets.

Figure 2: Steps to add/change bullets and numbering



### To add Bullets or Numbering

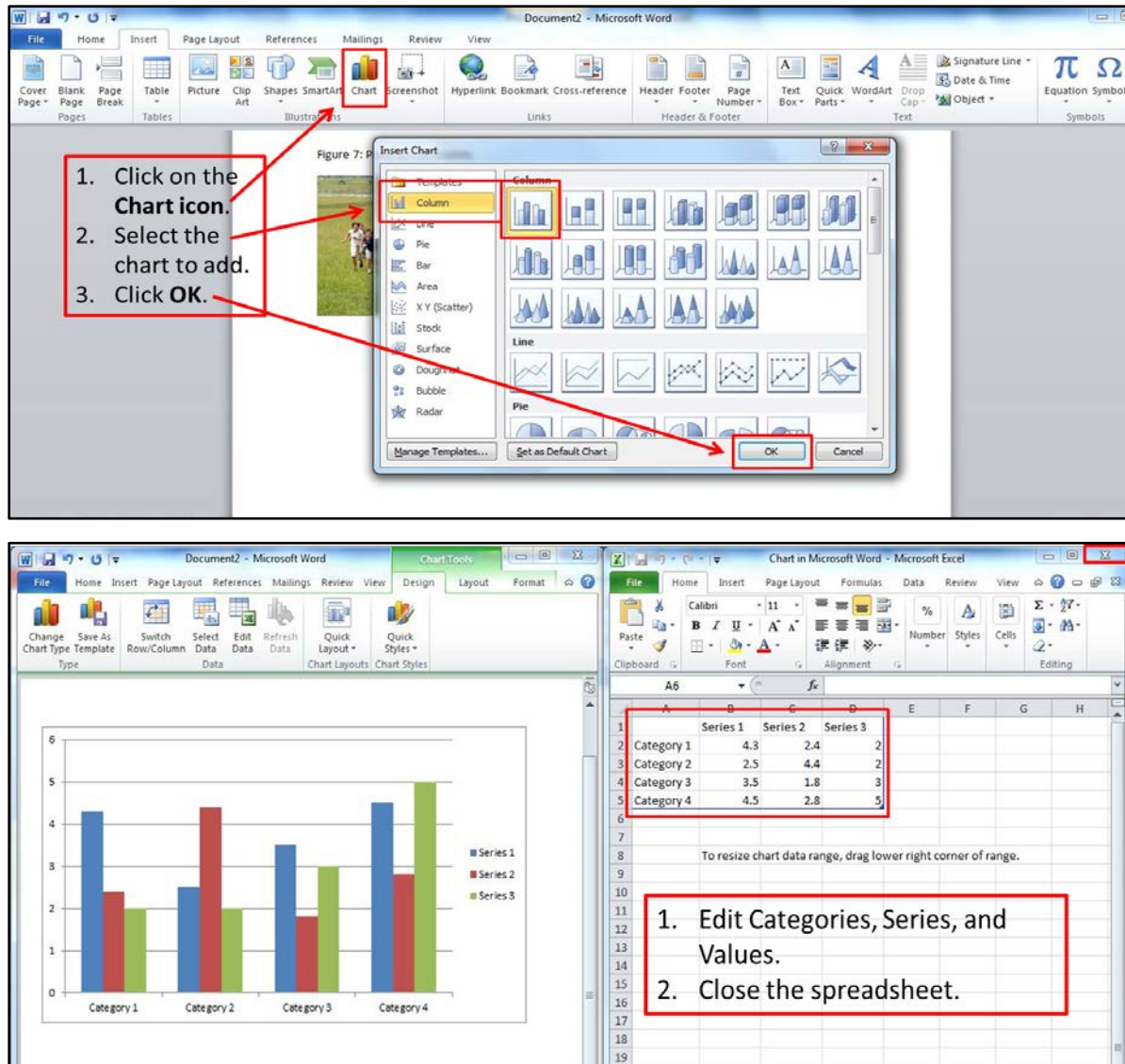
1. Select the text or object.
2. Click the **Home** tab.
3. Click the **Bullet** or **Number** icon in the toolbar.

(Note: To change the bullet: click the down-arrow next to the bullet and select another style bullet. To restart the numbering: highlight the text to renumber, click the down-arrow next to the Number icon, click **Bullets and Numbering**, change the value in the Start At field.)

## Chart Labels

For best results, use Word's chart templates when creating a chart or graph.

Figure 3 and 4: Steps to Add and Label a chart or graph

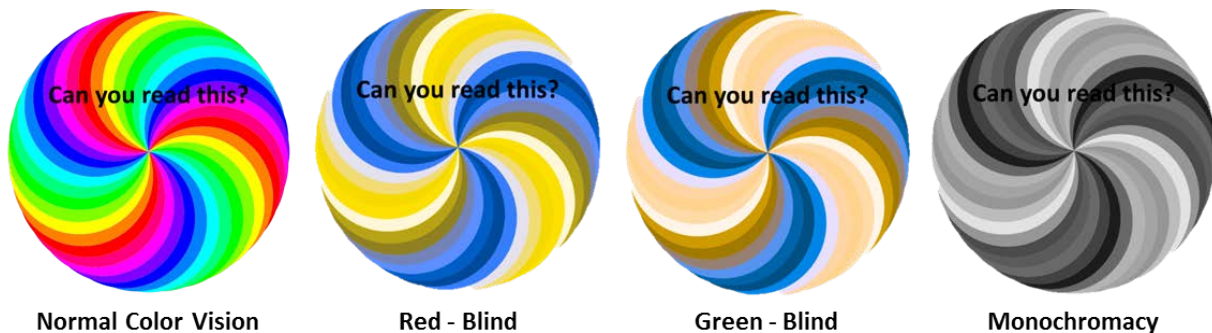


To add labels to a chart or graph:

1. Click the **Insert** tab.
2. Click the **Chart icon**.
3. Select the chart to add to your document.
4. Click **OK**. Word will insert the chart in your document and open an Excel window.
5. Edit the **Category, Series, and Number** fields and type the new label text or value.
6. Close the spreadsheet.

## Color

Figure 5: Samples of colorblindness



## Contrasts

Text must be easy to read in comparison to the background. Current trends of using variations of the color can make text very difficult to read for those with visual impairments. Test your color contrasts by printing them in grayscale or by using an online tool such as [WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker](#), [Coblis - Color Blindness Simulator](#), or another online tool.

## Color for Emphasis

Close to 9% of the population has some form of color blindness. Red/Green is the most common form of colorblindness but other forms exist. When using color to emphasize a piece of text include an alternate means of emphasis such as bolding or italics with text.

**DO:** Studies of online reading behavior show that online users **only read 28%** of the words on the screen during an average web page visit.

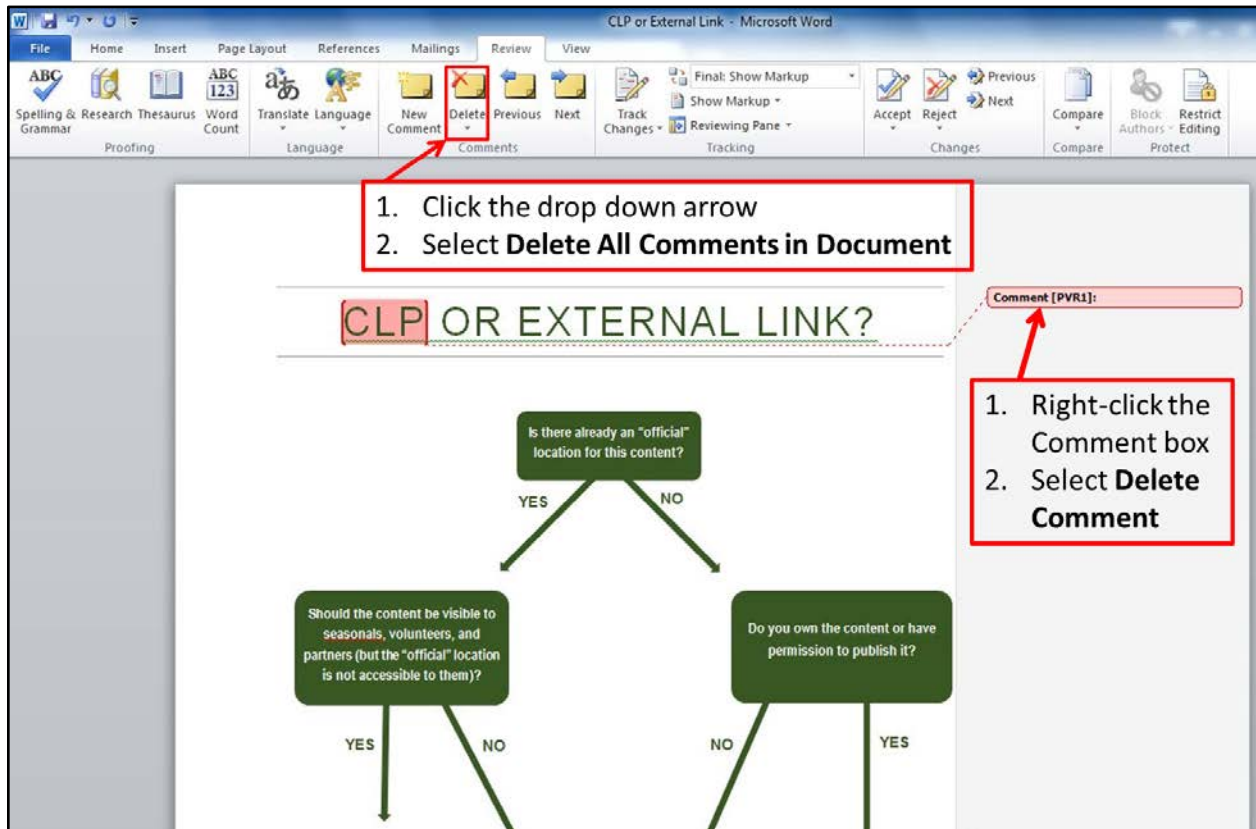
**DON'T:** Studies of online reading behavior show that online users **only read 28%** of the words on the screen during an average web page visit.



## Comments

Assistive technologies may read editorial comments even when they are not visible to the user. Remove all comments before publishing.

**Figure 6: Processes for deleting a comment in Word**



To remove a comment:

1. Right-click the comment box
2. Select Delete Comment

To remove all comments:

1. Go to the Delete icon in the Toolbar under the Review tab
2. Click the drop down arrow under Delete
3. Select Delete All Comments in Document

## Descriptive Text

Figure 7: Image of a graphic with descriptive text

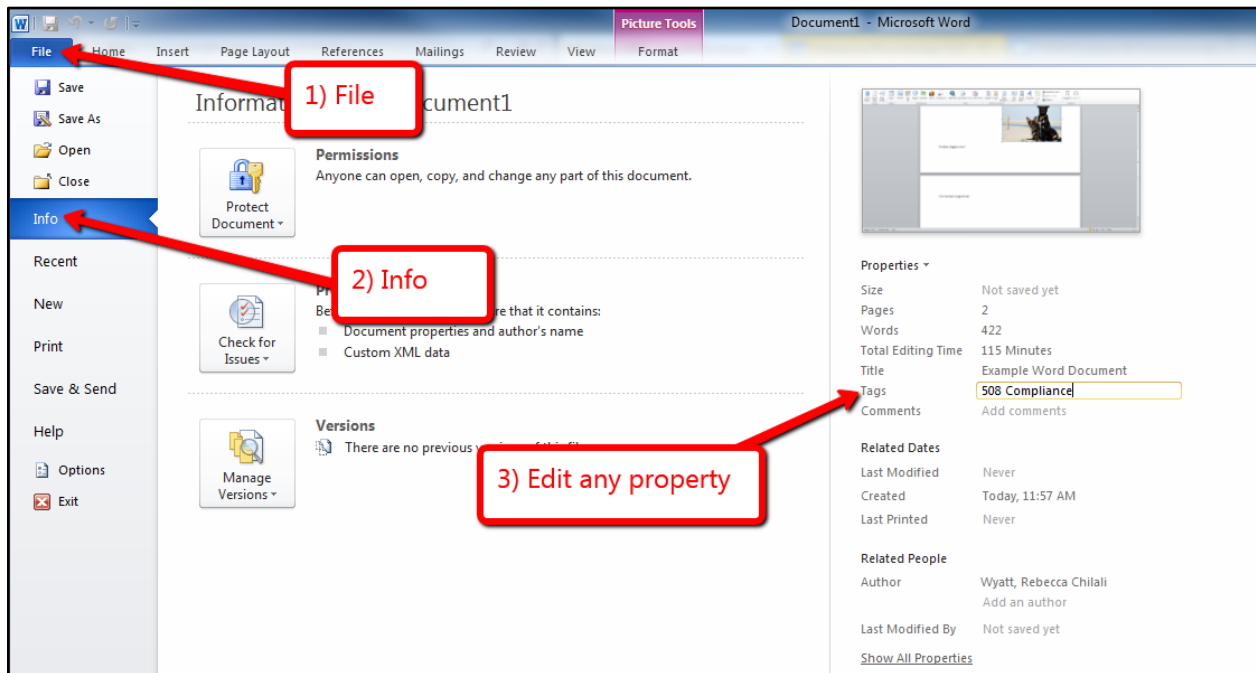


Include descriptions of all relevant images and graphs in short paragraph above or below the image or graph. This can include what the image or graph is intended to convey.

# Document Properties

Document properties provide the user with a basic overview of the document such as who authored it, the title, and keywords contained in the text. Screen readers use this information to help identify documents to the user.

**Figure 8. Document Properties**



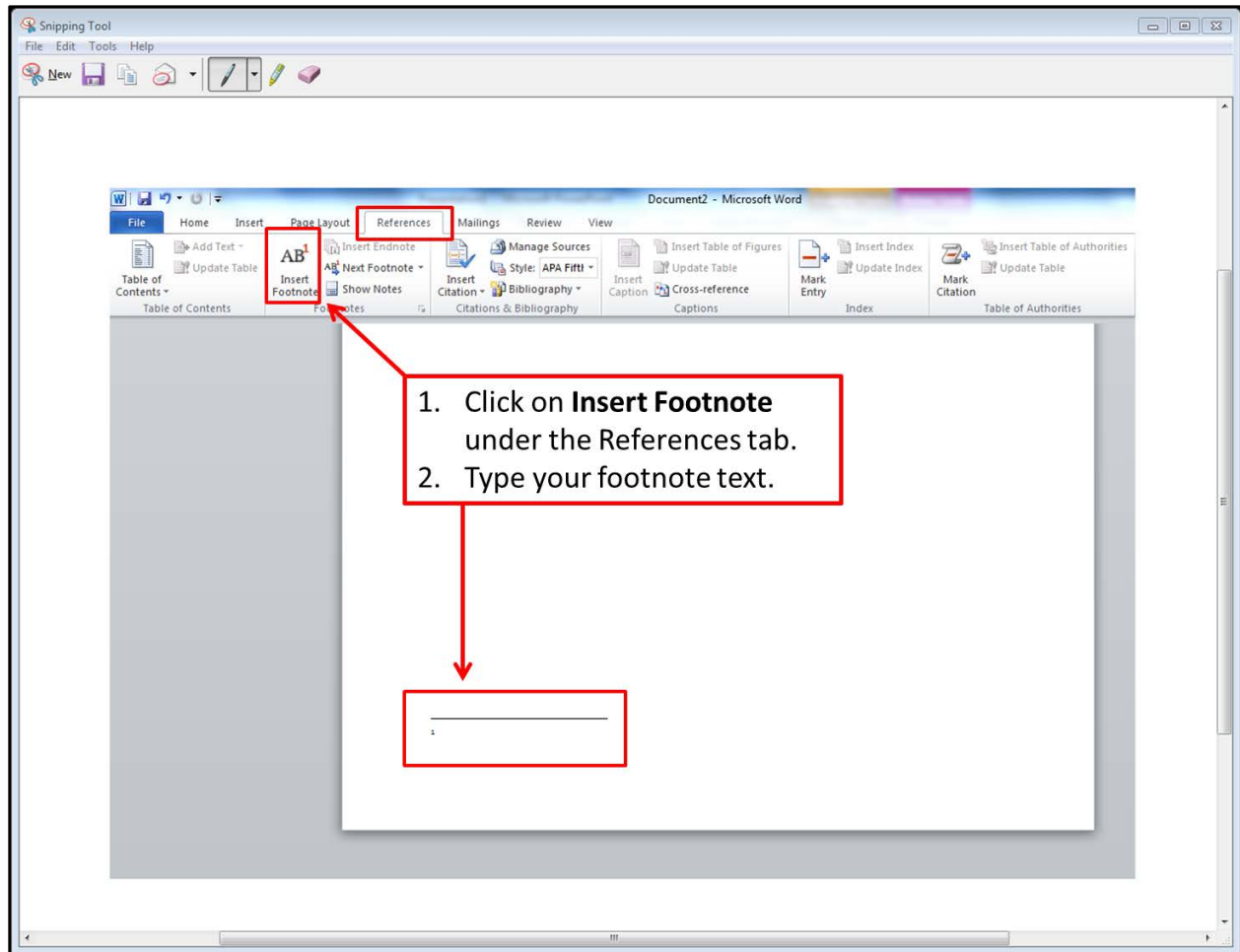
To access document properties:

1. Click **File > Info**.
2. Select Properties.
3. Complete the following fields:
  - **Title** – The title of your presentation
  - **Author** – The primary author should be the Government Organization – NPS
  - **Subject** – A description of your presentation
  - **Tags** – Keywords

# Footnotes

Use the Header & Footer tool to create headers and footers.

**Figure 9: Using the Footnote Tool**



To add a footnote:

1. Click **Insert Footnote** on the Reference tab.
2. Type your footnote in the box below the word footer.

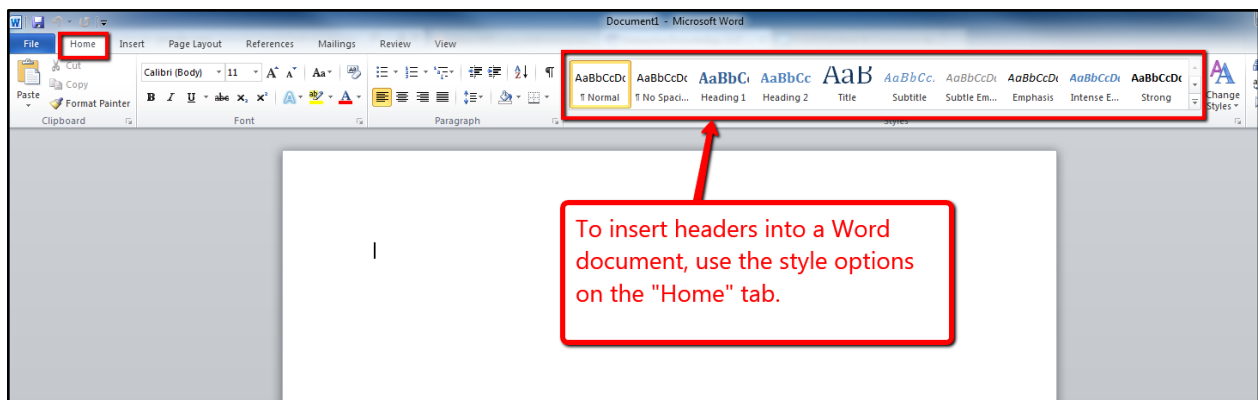
## Headings

Headings allow screen readers to easily navigate the sections of a document.

To add a title, subtitle, or heading

1. Highlight the text you would like to use as a title, subtitle, or header in the document.
2. Go to “Home” → “Styles” and choose a heading or title style.

**Figure 10: Add a heading**



## Hyperlinks and E-mail Addresses

Screen readers read each character of a URL one character at a time. When adding a URL as an active link, use the Hyperlink tool to create an active text link rather than spelling out a long URL. Generally, we recommend selecting a title, name, or object to use as the hyperlink, rather than showing the URL or using ‘Click Here’ text.

For example:

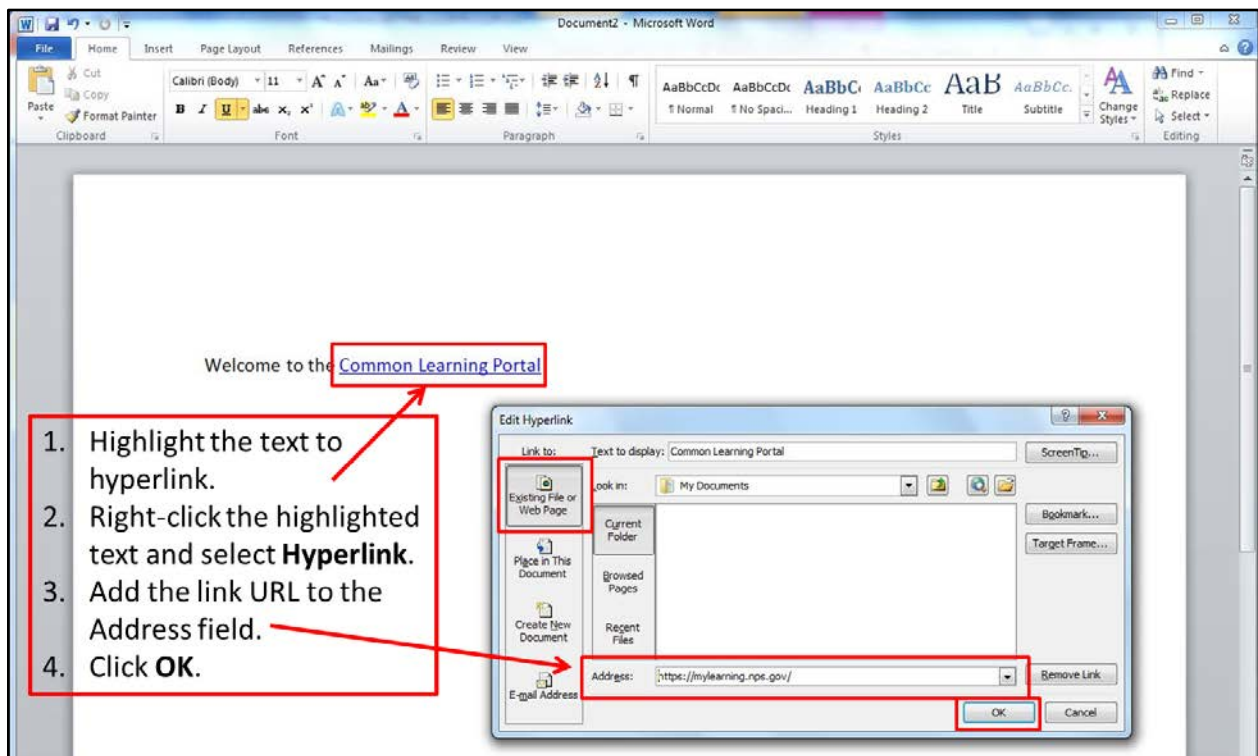
**DO:** Check out the [Common Learning Portal!](#)

**DON'T:** Click [here](#) to learn more about the Common Learning Portal!

**DON'T:** Go to <https://mylearning.nps.gov> to access the Common Learning Portal!

To add a hyperlink

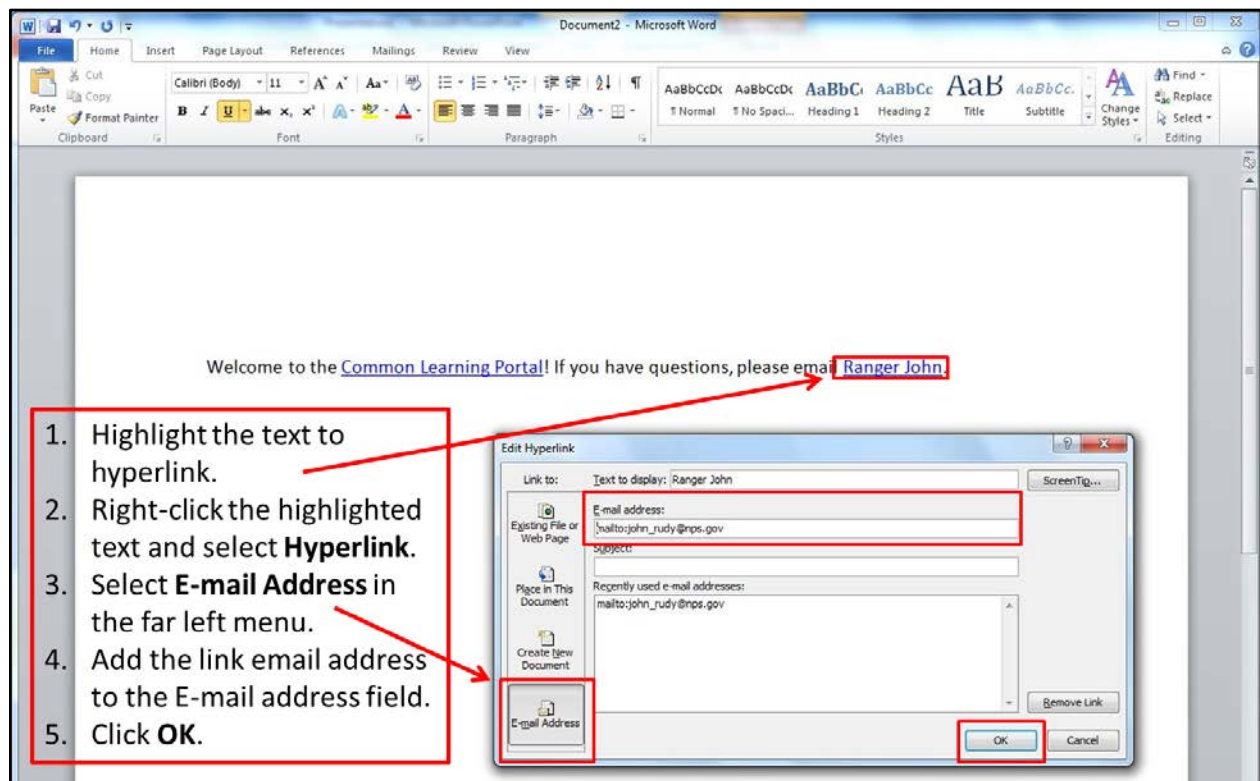
Figure 11: Adding a hyperlink



1. Highlight the *text* to use as the hyperlink.
2. Right-click the *selected text*.
3. Select **Hyperlink** from the drop-down menu.
4. Type the URL for the link in the **Address** field.
5. Click **OK**.

To add an Email link

Figure 12: Adding an email link

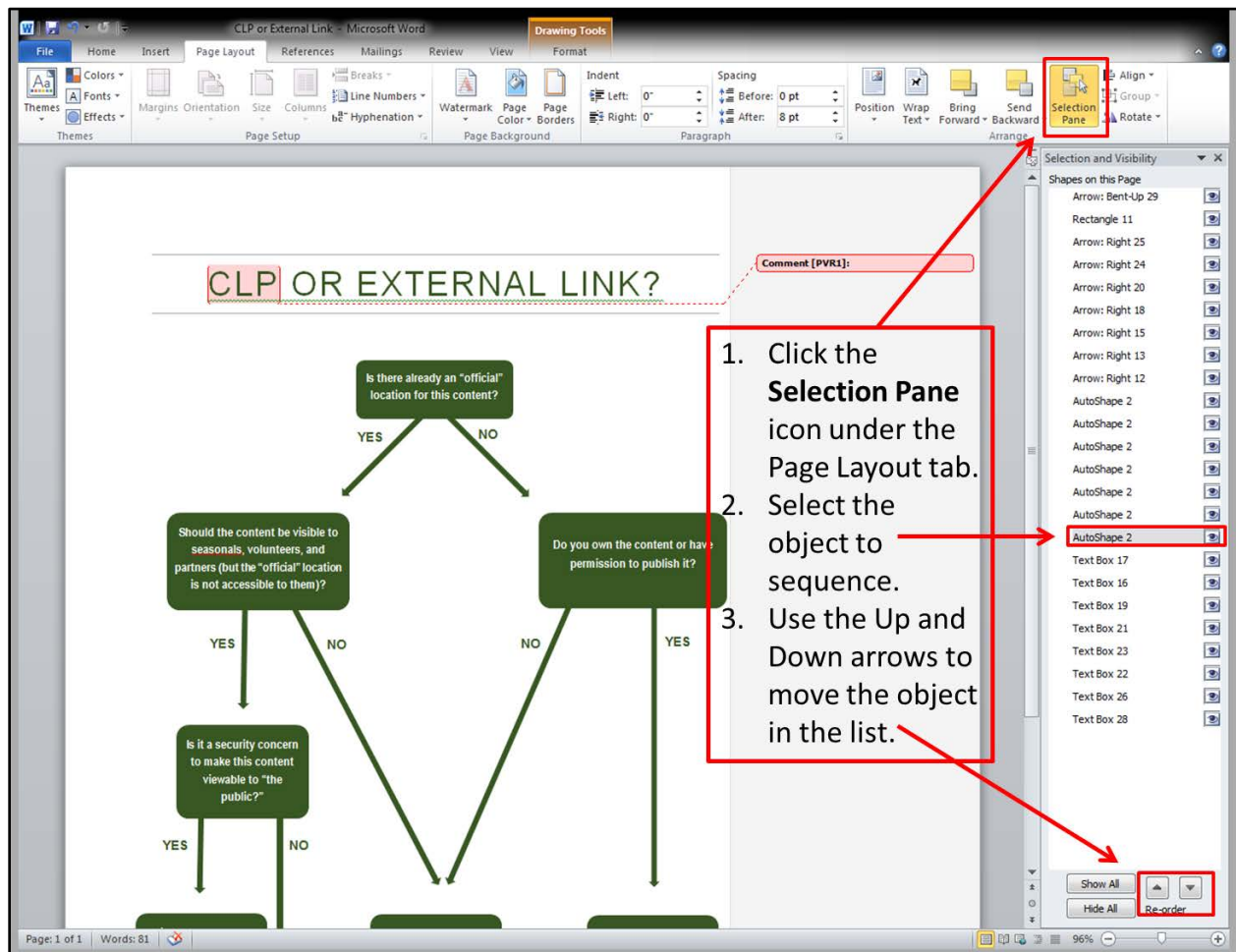


1. Highlight the text to use as the email hyperlink.
2. Right-click the selected text.
3. Select **Hyperlink** from the drop-down menu.
4. Click **Email Address** in the far left menu.
5. Type the email address in the **Email Address** field.
6. Click **OK**.

# Sequencing

Screen readers “read” a slide from the first object (including text) you added to the last. This may not be the order in which you want the information read. Use the Selection Pane to sequence the objects in the order in the correct order.

Figure 13: Sequencing objects in a document



1. Click **Page Layout > Selection Pane** to display the Selection Pane from the Home tab.
2. Select the object to sequence.
3. Use the Up and Down arrows at the bottom of the Selection Pane to move the object up or down in the list.

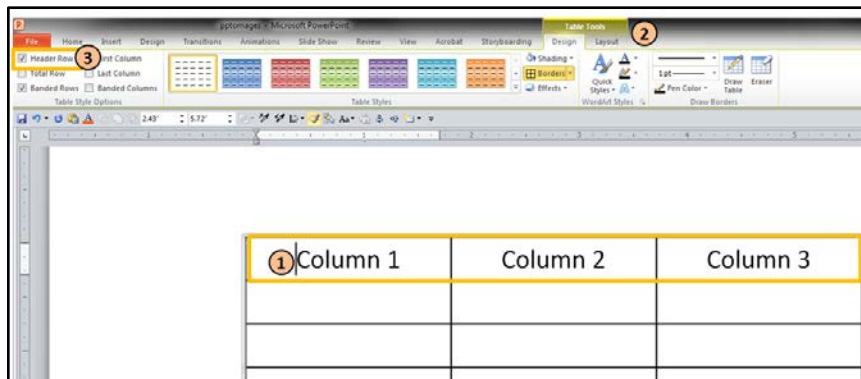
**Note:** The screen reader starts reading from the bottom of the list.



## Table Headings

Proper formatting of your table is imperative in allowing screen readers to work correctly. Do not just create table headings by modifying the font.

**Figure 14: Designating a table row as the “header” row**



To designate a header row:

1. Click in the top table row.
2. Click the **Table Tools** tab.
3. Click the **Header Row** checkbox in the Table Style Options group.

## Table Row Page Breaks

Ensure the table breaks cleanly between lines at the bottom of a page. Different monitors, projectors, and other display devices have different aspect ratios. Do not run a table to the bottom of a page. You will run the risk of having the bottom information cut off. If a table is getting long, consider reducing the number of words, the text size, or the line spacing or simply continue the table on the next slide.